

## Civil Rights Advisory Council

September 28, 2006

Meeting Minutes

**Members Present:** Christine Kaufmann, Chair; Dorothy Eck; June Hermanson; Jessie James-Hawley; Murray Pierce

**Staff Present:** Linda Carlson and Kathy Bean, of the Montana Office of Community Service

**Absent:** Marilyn Kramer, Katie Stevens

**Guests:** Mary Caferro (Weel – Working for Equality and Economic Liberation), Jacquie Gibson (Facilitator- Montana Consensus Council); Katherine Kountz (Human Rights Bureau)

The meeting opened with chair Christine Kaufmann welcoming the members and she directed their attention to the agenda and guests. Christine informed everyone that a facilitation process would follow the presentation by guest speaker Mary Caferro.

Mary Caferro gave an impassioned speech on the impoverished citizens of Montana. She spoke of the TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) program and how a family with children must be 70 % below poverty standards to qualify for welfare. Mary stated that many of whom they serve are women and children of domestic violence, families of substance abuse, family members having mental health disabilities or parents providing for children with disabilities. She stressed that it is a myth to perceive families receiving TANF as a generational entrenchment of the welfare system and that the average time for a Montana family receiving services is only 11 months. Mary asked the Council to not forget these Montana families and to support her efforts on policy change. She voiced her concerns that TANF families are discriminated against when programs are not providing education for successful employment but instead people receiving services are working undignified jobs with little room for sustainability or promotion.

Christine Kaufmann introduced Jacquie Gibson as the facilitator for the business portion of the meeting. Jacquie reviewed the Governor's direction to the four purposes of the CRA Council and asked each member to envision and state how each purpose could be accomplished. Council members provided a diverse array of input concerning each proposal listing numerous activities and possible actions.

After reflection and much conceptualizing, Council members prioritized their planning discussions. Jacquie continued facilitation in the creation of an action plan. The action plan, facilitation process and a preliminary proposal on examining civil rights issues regarding children and youth will be attachments to the meeting minutes. The action plan will be extremely beneficial for the Council in assessing accomplishments and ensuring accountability.

Christine Kaufmann introduced Katherine Kountz as the final speaker for the afternoon and addressed the possibilities of establishing a partnership with the HRB. Kathe reinstated the mission of the Human Rights Bureau and their inability, by law, to have policy impact. She expressed the many parallels to the Civil Rights Advisory Council and

encouraged members to attend the Bureau's hearings. The Council discussed the possibilities of the Bureau providing a relevant topic for the Council to hold hearings on. It was decided that at the November 14, 06 meeting, the Council will coincide a future meeting date with the HRB and possibly gather for an evening function to collaborate on civil and human right issues.

Jacquie Gibson asked each member to express their evaluation of the meeting proceedings and accomplishments. There was a unanimous, enthusiastic consensus that the Council members would actively participate in their roles as Council members. Council Chair adjourned the meeting.

Next meeting will be Nov. 14<sup>th</sup>, 06, 11:00a.m. - 3:00p.m. with lunch served. Location has not been determined at this time.